

## AN INTERESTING RELIC OF THE EARLY DAYS OF AUSTRALIAN EXPLORATION.

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(Illustrated in Plate XI.)

THE exceptional interest attaching to the "Investigator" tree from Sweers Island,<sup>1</sup> Gulf of Carpentaria, demands some slight notice, in view of the fact that the greater portion of the tree has now been safely housed in one of the larger cases in the Aboriginal Court of the Queensland Museum. It would appear that the first date and name to be marked upon this tree was "1781 Lowy," the name of an early Dutch sailing vessel commanded by Captain Tasman, and secondly "1798," together with some Chinese<sup>2</sup> characters. It was usual at that early date for the Chinese to visit the Gulf waters for the purpose of collecting *bêche-de-mer*. Some years prior to the arrival of Captain Flinders on Wednesday, 17th November, 1802, a junk was wrecked on the island, and a number of the crew who were saved lived on the island until rescued by a Macassar prow. The mast of the junk was of teak-wood, and is still, I believe, to be seen on the beach.

Flinders marked this tree with the figures and word "1802 Investigator" prior to his leaving the island in December of the same year. The words "Robert Devine" (first lieutenant) are remarkably well cut.

In 1841 Captain Stokes<sup>3</sup> inscribed the name of his vessel, the "Beagle," upon the tree. The exact situation of the "Investigator" tree and the well close to it he obtained from Flinders' charts and diary.

In 1856 "Chimmo," a lieutenant and naval surveyor in command of the "Sandfly," cut his name on the tree. In his diary he speaks of finding a well which Flinders sank on Sweers Island and which he describes as being rather brackish. Further, the tree was found and marked by Captain Norman, of the

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<sup>1</sup> Voyage of Terra Australis in H.M.S. "Investigator," commanded by Matthew Flinders, London, 1814, volume 2, page 135.

<sup>2</sup> Two Chinese spoons and some coins, from this very point where Captain Flinders saw the skeletons referred to in "The Voyage to Terra Australis," are now in the possession of Captain W. C. Thomson, s.s. "Wyandra," to whom I am indebted for much valuable assistance.

<sup>3</sup> Stokes, Discoveries in Australia, London, 1846, volume 2, page 270.

